

EXPORT INFORMATION – Frequently Asked Questions

This section includes an export section of frequently asked questions that are submitted to the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

Q. Will foreign countries accept table eggs packaged in domestic cartons?

A. Foreign countries may specify labeling requirements for the primary container (carton) and the shipping container or both. When regulatory labeling requirements exist, the applicable information will be listed for each country.

Q. Can an AMS certificate be acquired for shell eggs already shipped or awaiting entry to a foreign country?

A. No, only eggs processed in an official shell egg plant under the control of an AMS Grader meeting applicable foreign government certification requirements will obtain an export certificate.

Q. What is the definition of current production for fresh shell eggs?

A. Only shell eggs 21 days of less of age, including date of production, may be presented for USDA certification. Further, the eggs must originate from layer flocks that are progeny of breeder flocks certified as participating in the USDA's NPIP. Additional animal health requirements may be applicable depending upon the country of destination.

Q. Can an extended shelf life be certified by USDA for fresh shell eggs?

A. AMS Poultry Programs cannot certify the quality of shell eggs beyond 30 days. Handling practices, relative humidity, and refrigeration conditions may impact the quality of the eggs during storage and transport. If an expiration date is required on shell eggs destined for a foreign country and the processor elects to apply an expiration date exceeding 30 days, the export certificate issued will include a disclaimer clause indicating the processor is responsible for the shelf life declared.

Q. Is export certification of shell eggs destined for Military Commissary Distribution Centers located in foreign countries required?

A. Shell eggs packaged in consumer labeled containers destined for distribution to military commissaries located in foreign countries is currently exempt from the import certification requirements for the country of destinations. When a shipment of shell eggs destined for a military commissary is refused entry, contact Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA representative to assist in resolving any issues.

Q. Will AMS Poultry Programs issue an appropriate export certificated when an identified lot of shell eggs are sample graded?

A. No. A lot of shell eggs that is not produced under the supervision of a USDA Grader may be examined to determine quality based upon U.S. Grade Standards. However, a disclaimer is placed on the certificate issued stating that the grade assigned is only based upon the quality of the samples examined. Additionally, only shell eggs processed in accordance with applicable regulations under the supervision of a USDA Grader are eligible for the certification as fit for human consumption.

Q. Can the animal health attestations (Disease Free Statements) be modified upon request?

A. No. AMS Poultry Programs is recognized as an authorized certifying agent by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and foreign government veterinary service authorities. Therefore, only authorized statements may be issued.

Q. Is an export certificate required to ship shell eggs to the U.S. territories?

A. No. However, these territories have the authority to require specific labeling, including the stamping of individual eggs.

Q. Can organic eggs be exported?

A. The export of eggs identified as originating from layer flocks certified under the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) is dependent upon whether the destination foreign country has regulatory requirements defining organic product. Currently, Canada is recognizing eggs originating from U.S. producers certified as meeting the NOP requirement.

Q. If shell eggs originate from U.S. layer flocks meeting required animal health requirements, will foreign governments allow the import of nest run eggs (unwashed eggs direct from the layer house)?

A. Only Canada has agreed to the import of next run eggs with limited visual segregation of leaking or excessively dirty eggs. All other foreign governments do not allow the import of eggs with adhering foreign materials. The United States does not allow the import of eggs unless washed in a manner equivalent to that stated in the regulations (7CFR56).

Q. What is the cost of export certification for shell eggs?

A. The egg processor/packer is responsible for the cost associated with the certification for the export under the voluntary shell egg grading service contract. If verification of criteria beyond the grading activities at the official plant is required, these activities will be performed at the current fee rated stated in the regulations.

Q. Can table eggs certified as destined for a declared country be shipped to an alternate country accompanied by the same USDA certificates?

A. Each foreign country may have specific certification requirements for imported table eggs. The USDA certificate was issued for the product and destination declared on the document. Therefore, shipping to an alternate country is the risk of the exporter.

Q. If a shipment of fresh shell eggs is refused entry to the country declared on the USDA certificate, who can assist with the incident?

A. Contact AMS Poultry Programs at +1(202) 720-3272 and provide the details describing the shipment, USDA certificate number, quantity involved, point/location of refused entry, and reason(s) for refused entry. The information will be shared with representatives of the Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA, to attempt to resolve the issue.

Q. Are shell eggs certified for export subject to applicable FDA and FSIS regulatory minimum ambient refrigeration requirements for storage and transport of shell eggs?

A. Yes. Eggs certified for export are subject to the referenced ambient refrigeration (45° F) requirements until the ship disembarks from the United States.